

# FIRE CHIEF

CITY OF CEDAR RAPIDS *Iowa*



## Why Apply?



The next Fire Chief of the Cedar Rapids Fire Department will join a progressive, nationally respected organization with a strong culture, engaged workforce, and deep community support. As Iowa's second-largest fire department and a two-time accredited agency, Cedar Rapids Fire Department prides itself on professionalism, innovation, and regional leadership in emergency services. The Department operates advanced specialty teams, has a respected USAR program, and maintains a strong labor-management relationship. The organization is trending upward with a young and energized leadership team, supportive City leadership, and a community that values public safety and collaboration. The next Chief will have the opportunity to build upon this momentum and help shape the Department's future.



# *Welcome to* CEDAR RAPIDS

Located in eastern Iowa along the Cedar River, Cedar Rapids is the state's second-largest city and a vibrant community of roughly 139,000 residents known for its strong manufacturing base, rich Czech and Slovak heritage, and a high quality of life supported by a relatively affordable cost of living. Positioned in the heart of the Cedar Rapids–Iowa City corridor, the city serves as the economic and cultural center for the region.

Founded as a river town in the mid-1800s, Cedar Rapids developed over time into a center for grain processing and food production, a legacy that continues today with major employers such as General Mills, Cargill, and Quaker Oats. More recently, Cedar Rapids has expanded into advanced manufacturing, aerospace, and financial services, anchored by companies like Collins Aerospace and Transamerica. This combination of legacy industry and modern innovation has helped create a stable employment base across the region.

Downtown Cedar Rapids has undergone significant transformation, particularly following the 2008 flood, which reshaped much of the riverfront and central core. The city has invested heavily in rebuilding infrastructure, restoring historic buildings, and creating new public spaces along the Cedar River. The result is a more connected and walkable downtown that blends civic buildings, entertainment venues, and riverfront parks.

The City of Cedar Rapids offers an impressive array of public recreation, including two aquatic centers, indoor and outdoor pools, 11 splash pads, 18-hole golf and mini-golf courses, BMX dirt track, skate park, disc golf courses, off-leash dog parks, and over 100 parks—including a farm with a petting zoo. Nearby lakes and rivers, along with the Cedar River running through town, provide easy access to kayaking, fishing, paddling, and scenic riverfront trails. The Eastern Iowa Airport serves the region and is located about 8 miles south of downtown.



# THE CITY OF CEDAR RAPIDS

The City of Cedar Rapids is a full-service city serving a population of 139,000 across 72 square miles with a 2027 total budget of \$928 million, a General Fund of \$179 million, and staffing of over 1,300 people. Incorporated in 1849, the City of Cedar Rapids operates under a Council-Manager form of government with a City Council composed of eight council members and the Mayor, each serving a four-year term. The Mayor and three council members are elected at large, while the remaining five council members are elected by district voters. The Council appoints a City Manager to oversee the City's day-to-day administrative operations.



## THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Cedar Rapids Fire Department (CRFD) has proudly served the residents, businesses, and visitors of Cedar Rapids since 1869. CRFD is an all-hazards department comprised of 149 full-time personnel, including 4 civilian positions, 13 chief officers (Chief, Assistant Chiefs, and Battalion Chiefs), 42 captains, and 90 firefighters. CRFD operates with an annual budget of \$26 million and responded to 16,310 calls for service in 2025.

Operations include primary fire protection and response, non-transport paramedic-level emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, water and ice rescue, confined space rescue, low- and high-angle rope rescue, trench rescue, and urban search and rescue capabilities. All personnel are certified at a minimum EMT level, and 63 personnel are certified paramedics. The Department works in partnership with Area Ambulance Service, which provides medical transport to the community.

The Department operates from nine stations and is headquartered in a 67,140-square-foot Central Fire Station built in 2013. At the time of its completion, it was the largest fire station in the United States to earn LEED Platinum certification. The facility houses administrative offices, training classrooms, the Emergency Operations Command Center, an Engine Company, Truck Company, Rescue Company, and Battalion Chiefs.

The Department protects 72.1 square miles and maintains mutual aid agreements with fire agencies throughout Linn County. The response area is geographically diverse, featuring residential neighborhoods, mid-rise commercial buildings, and heavy industrial zones. Notable hazards protected by the Department include major manufacturing operations such as grain and paper milling facilities, as well as the Cedar River and its associated water structures.





# OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

## ***Staffing and Service Delivery***

Based on organizational studies and strategic planning efforts, the department continues evaluating staffing levels, deployment models, and operational effectiveness to meet increasing service demands. The next chief will need to balance response expectations, workforce sustainability, mandatory overtime concerns, and budget realities while continuing to improve service delivery, response times, and organizational readiness.

## ***Facility Modernization and Growth Planning***

Several fire stations date back to the 1950s and will require modernization, rehabilitation, or replacement in the coming years. Continued community growth and development patterns will influence long-term station placement, deployment strategies, and capital improvement planning. The next chief will play a key role in advancing facility planning efforts, advocating for and securing funding, and positioning the organization for future operational needs.

## ***High-Risk Industrial and All-Hazards Environment***

Cedar Rapids presents a complex and diverse risk profile that includes ethanol plants, food processing facilities, manufacturing operations, transportation corridors, and airport-related hazards. These risks require strong hazardous materials, technical rescue, emergency management, and interagency coordination capabilities. The next chief must continue supporting advanced specialty response programs while ensuring preparedness, training, and regional collaboration remain organizational priorities.

## ***Balancing EMS Demand with Suppression Readiness***

The department continues to experience increasing EMS-related workload and community service demands. The next chief will need to ensure the organization maintains strong suppression readiness, operational effectiveness, and workforce sustainability while balancing evolving EMS expectations, deployment demands, and available staffing resources.

## ***Workforce Engagement and Organizational Development***

The department is experiencing generational transition within both line personnel and leadership ranks. The next chief will have the opportunity to continue strengthening leadership development, mentorship, succession planning, and employee engagement while maintaining the department's positive labor-management culture and strong organizational reputation.

# THE IDEAL FIRE CHIEF

- **Servant Leader with Presence** – Visible, approachable, and engaged with personnel at all levels of the organization. Committed to station visits, open communication, honest conversations, and maintaining strong relationships throughout the department and community.
- **Culture Builder** – Protects and strengthens the department’s positive culture by fostering accountability, trust, engagement, and collaboration. Values people, listens to employees, and supports a healthy labor-management environment built on mutual respect.
- **Strategic Leader & Advocate** – Thinks beyond day-to-day operations with the ability to lead long-term strategic initiatives involving accreditation, staffing, facilities, capital improvements, and organizational development.
- **Political & Community Savvy** – Effectively navigates a City Manager form of government, City Council relationships, and community expectations while building credibility and trust with elected officials, stakeholders, and industry partners.
- **Operationally Credible** – Brings strong fire service leadership experience with an appreciation for all-hazards response, special operations, emergency management, and regional coordination while empowering others through decentralized leadership.
- **Collaborative Regional Partner** – Works effectively with law enforcement, emergency management, neighboring fire agencies, volunteer departments, healthcare providers, and regional response partners to strengthen operational and community relationships.
- **Strong Communicator** – Honest, transparent, and consistent in messaging. Communicates organizational needs effectively, explains the “why” behind decisions, and connects equally well with firefighters, City leadership, and the community.
- **Coach & Mentor** – Invests in leadership development, mentorship, succession planning, and employee growth while encouraging accountability, engagement, and professional development at all levels of the organization.
- **Financial & Administrative Competence** – Understands municipal budgeting, capital improvement planning, grants, staffing models, accreditation systems, and long-term organizational sustainability within realistic fiscal constraints.
- **Relationship-Driven Leader with Integrity** – Leads with humility, emotional intelligence, accountability, and strong character. Builds trust through consistency, credibility, ethical leadership, and a genuine investment in both people and community.

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# EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in fire science, public administration, or a related field and 15 years of paid fire department full-time service in a position equivalent to Captain or higher in a similarly sized agency. Or an equivalent combination of education and/or experience.

## LICENSES & CERTIFICATIONS

- Valid Driver's License
- Emergency Medical Technician or Paramedic Certification
- Firefighter I and II
- Fire Officer I and II

## DESIRED

- Advanced degree from an accredited college or university
- Demonstration of ongoing professional development

# COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The City of Cedar Rapids offers an annual salary range of \$152,934 to \$214,000, based on qualifications and experience, along with a comprehensive [benefits](#) package.

# RESOURCES

[FY 2027 Fire Budget Book](#)

[2023-2027 Fire Strategic Plan](#)

[2025 Fire Annual Report](#)

[Cedar Rapids Tourism](#)



**CEDAR RAPIDS**  
City of Five Seasons®



# TO APPLY

Apply Online: [gmphr.com](http://gmphr.com)

First Review: **July 6, 2026**

More Info: Gordie Olson, GMP Consultants  
[golson@gmphr.com](mailto:golson@gmphr.com) / (720) 518-7420

